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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 006994

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Oil for Food Scandal
Earthquake in Kashmir - Geopolitical Considerations Harriet
Miers Nomination
PARIS - Wednesday, October 12, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Oil for Food Scandal
Earthquake in Kashmir - Geopolitical Considerations
Harriet Miers Nomination

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

A wide variety of domestic stories dominate today's front pages, except for right-of-center economic Les Echos, which devotes its lead to Washington's "Strong-Arming Policies With Beijing." "The Secretary of the Treasury's visit will be an opportunity to increase the pressure on China, with Secretary Snow asking that China re-evaluate the Yuan." Left-of-center Liberation leads with the latest arrest in the "Oil for Food" scandal in France, that of former UN Ambassador Jean-Bernard Merimee. The editorial suggests that ultimately "responsibility lies at the highest level of the State." (See Part C)

Right-of-center Le Figaro devotes an editorial to "Earthquake Diplomacy" in the wake of the earthquake in Kashmir. (See Part C) France 2 Television announced this morning that Secretary Rice would be stopping in Islamabad after visiting Afghanistan. In an article on President Chirac's return to diplomacy after his recent health problems, Le Figaro notes that he will be meeting with Secretary Rice on Friday.

Popular right-of-center France Soir devotes a full-page report to a recent article in Newsweek, which alleged that Secretary Rice was responsible for thwarting a Washington plan to invade Syria. Thomas de Rochechouart quotes Secretary Rice in Kyrgyzstan: "Do not believe everything you read."

The nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court elicits two opposing commentaries. In Liberation, Barthelemy Courrmont of the Institute for International and Strategic Relations writes: "Her nomination raises once more the question of Supreme Court Justices who are designated more because of their political affiliation than their experience. More than ever the question of impartiality is becoming an issue. The credibility of the American justice system is becoming a key element in the structural debates in the U.S." But Catholic La Croix carries an opinion piece by Pierre de Charentenay, editor in chief of the magazine 'Etudes,' titled "The New Supreme Court." (See Part C)

Right-of-center les Echos carries an op-ed by Stephan Richter of "The Globalist" titled: "American Royalism." "Faced with incredible challenges, President Bush has made one daring declaration after another. But behind the words, one soon realizes that nothing concrete follows. One example is America's African aid policy. America's new political strategy could in fact be renamed the 'execution of a Presidential policy through press releases.' The advantage is that there is always an official text one can refer to. But abroad, this attitude is perceived as being regressive. and becoming counter-productive: it undermines the American desire to serve as a democratic model."

Ironically, left-of-center Liberation carries an op-ed about President Chirac's own "Diplomatic Monarchy" by Alain Duhamel: "France is hostile to Turkey's EU membership. But the President is in favor. When it comes to diplomacy, defense and cooperation, the President acts like a Monarch. In foreign policy, the French Head of State acts as absolute master. In this regard, French democracy is an absolute myth. This is both shocking and dangerous."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Oil for Food Scandal

"The Big Heist"
Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (10/12): "The

blood-stained chaos that reigns in Iraq could lead one to put in perspective the fallout from the 'oil for food' affair that seems outdated. But that would be a mistake. First, because France, and its diplomacy, therefore its image, are in the line of fire of the investigation into wrongdoings in the 'Oil for Food' scandal. The amounts of money embezzled make it the biggest heist ever! All those who participated in this heist worked hand in hand with a dictator who will soon be on trial for his crimes. The arrest of French diplomats who have influenced France's foreign policy, including its so-called Arab policy, casts doubts on this same policy. The responsibility lies at the highest level of the State, where the truth was necessarily known."

Earthquake in Kashmir - Geopolitical Considerations

"Earthquake Diplomacy"

Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/12): "As opposed to other recent natural disasters, the earthquake in Kashmir is centered exactly where the world's geo-political equilibrium is most threatened. The geo-political consequences of the disaster will depend on how the post-crisis management is handled. The fact that Pakistan has accepted India's offer of assistance is an encouraging sign. A rapprochement between Greece and Turkey had followed the 1999 earthquake. Let us hope that India and Pakistan, who have already initiated steps towards their re-conciliation, will be similarly inspired. In Kashmir, the devastation is such that survival overtakes political considerations. If rescue efforts are successful, they can reduce the influence of Islamic radicals. Conversely, if they are not, President Musharaff will come out weakened and the extremists will regain new power. These stakes are well understood by all: in Islamabad as well as Washington. This is why the U.S. is mobilizing all its means available in the region."

Harriet Miers Nomination

"The New Supreme Court"

Pierre de Charentenay in Catholic La Croix (10/12): "The two new judges to the U.S. Supreme Court are indeed Republicans, but they are far less conservative than initially feared. The equilibrium of the Supreme Court is overall preserved. The American press has noted that President Bush has shown a certain degree of caution in making these nominations. He wants to avoid an ideological war as well as costly political adventures at a time when he is greatly weakened politically, including within his own party. The negative effects of the war in Iraq have cost the U.S. President much support. Arrogance and haughtiness have disappeared from a White House which is no longer taking any risks." STAPLETON